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AN  
APPEAL TO THE PUBLIC,  
IN BEHALF OF THE  
**Theological Institute of Connecticut.**

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The Trustees of the Theological Institute of Connecticut, would invite the attention of the public to some considerations, suggested by a statement of the Theological Professors of Yale College, recently published, and extensively circulated.

We should deem it altogether improper, in our official capacity, to take notice of this document, were it not necessary for the vindication of ourselves, and of the founders and supporters of the seminary under our care. But finding ourselves implicitly charged with being engaged in an enterprise for which no justifiable reason can be assigned, we feel ourselves called upon to make a frank exposition of our views, and motives, to the Christian public.

The Professors say: "It is well known to the public, that a second Theological seminary has been organized in this State. To the establishment of such an institution, as a means simply of increasing the facilities for theological instruction, we should be the last to object; but this institution, it is well known, was established avowedly on the ground, that the department under our care, has become the seat of dangerous error. Against such an assumption, we feel ourselves bound most solemnly to protest." They say also: "On the ground of our entire conformity to their own standard of orthodoxy, the friends of the Theological Institute, are forever precluded from saying, or insinuating, that a new institution was called for to oppose any errors of ours."

The impression which these statements are evidently intended to make on the public mind, is, that the founders and friends of the Theological Institute, are laboring under an entire delusion, in supposing that there exists any important difference of theological views among the Congregational ministers of Connecticut; and that under the influence of this delusion, they have gone forward to establish a seminary which is not called for, and which ought not to be patronized by the Christian public. They assume it to be a fact, that the new institution is intended to be arrayed in opposition to the one with which they are connected; and that the sole object for which it was founded, is, to oppose certain errors which exist only in the imagination of its friends and supporters. Whether these representations are well founded, the public will judge, when they have carefully attended to what we have to say in our own defence.

We do not deny, that there exists serious dissatisfaction in relation to the Theological School at New-Haven; and that this is among the reasons which have given rise to the new Institution. The grounds of this dissatisfaction, we now feel ourselves called upon frankly to state.

1. Many have been dissatisfied, that the Theological School at New-Haven, has no more connexion with the ministers and churches of the State. Being an appendage of the College, it is under the entire control of the Corporation; a Board which, as at present constituted, is deemed altogether unsuitable to be the guardians of a Theological Seminary. It is well known, that of the eighteen members who compose this Board, (exclusive of the President,) eight are ex-officio members,—the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and six Senators. These are annually chosen by

the people at large, and are, of course, such men as happen to be elected to these offices. They may, and often do, belong to different religious denominations. There is no certainty that they will not be, occasionally at least, men whose influence, (great as it must be from the stations which they occupy,) will be exerted in opposition to evangelical religion;\* yet they have a right, equally with the other members of the Board, to act, and vote, in the election and removal of the Theological Professors, in directing the course of studies, and in regulating all the internal concerns of the Institution. That a school, intended for the theological education of Congregational ministers, should be under the entire control of a Board thus constituted, has appeared to many altogether improper; and they have looked forward with no small degree of solicitude to the probable results of such an arrangement.

2. Another ground of dissatisfaction with the New-Haven school, as at present organized, is the want of sufficient security against the introduction of heresy. In regard to three of the Theological Professors,† it is not known that they are required to give their assent to any Confession of Faith, or that the Corporation are required, or even authorised, to remove them from office, for any heretical opinions whatever.‡ In regard to the Professorship of Didactic Theology, the founders do indeed make the following requisition: "Every Professor who shall receive the income or revenue of this fund, shall be examined as to his faith, and be required to make a written declaration thereof, agreeably to the following: *I hereby declare my free assent to the Confession of Faith, and ecclesiastical discipline, agreed upon by the churches of the State, in the year 1708,*" i. e., the Saybrook Platform. "If, at any future period, any person who fills the chair of this Professorship, *holds or teaches* doctrines contrary to those above referred to, then it shall be the duty of the Corporation of the College to dismiss such person from office, forthwith." Yet the Professors say in their statement, that "a subscription to Confessions of Faith," is to be considered "as made *for substance of doctrine* therein contained, without binding the conscience to every expression used." They say also, that the present incumbent, while Professor elect, "had certain knowledge, from personal intercourse with the founders, that if he had embraced every minute doctrine of the *Confession*, it would have been considered a decisive disqualification for the office."

In view of these statements, the question naturally arises, On what is this Professorship founded, and for what cause are the Corporation required to dismiss the Professor from office? The founders, so far as appears from their statutes, require an unqualified assent to the Confession of Faith contained in the Platform, and make it the duty of the Corporation to dismiss the Professor from office, if he *holds or teaches* doctrines contrary to those contained in this Confession. Yet it is admitted, that

\* We shall not be understood to have any reference to the present members of the Corporation. We speak only of what may be. Nor do we complain of the manner in which this Board is constituted, so far as it relates to the Academical Department merely; but only in reference to the Theological School. The principle for which we contend, is, that a Theological Seminary ought to be under the control of a distinct Board of Trustees, composed of ministers and members of churches, who are amenable to some ecclesiastical body. The Trustees of the Theological Institute, are appointed by the Pastoral Union, and are amenable to them. There is, of course, a connexion between the Seminary and the ministers and churches, which would not exist, were it under the control of an independant and irresponsible Board.

† The Professors of Divinity, of Biblical Literature, and of Rhetoric.

‡ Some of the Professors in this department may have given their assent to the Saybrook Platform, at the time when they were inducted into office; but since that time, the test law of the College has been repealed, and, so far as we have been able to learn, no exception was made in regard to the Theological Professors.



the present Professor, does hold and teach doctrines contrary to those above referred to. But it is contended, that he is not liable, on this account, to impeachment, because he had "certain knowledge, from personal intercourse with the founders," that it is their will that he should hold and teach doctrines contrary to the Confession to which they have required him to "declare his free assent," in the most unqualified terms. What, then, is the creed by which this Professor is bound? In case of impeachment, by what standard is he to be tried? By the creed which the present Professor submitted to the Corporation? But this is not mentioned by the founders; and if it had been, in what sense is it to be taken? In the literal and unqualified sense, or only "for substance of doctrine?" Is the Saybrook Platform, "for substance of doctrine," to be considered as the standard? Neither is this mentioned by the founders. And if we may suppose it to have been so understood, how is it to be ascertained what is implied in a subscription to a creed "for substance of doctrine?" How much may be rejected, and still the substance be retained? Who shall draw the line, and where shall the line be drawn? Here, as it appears to us, is room for endless debate; and if the principles laid down by the Professors, be admitted, we see not how a charge of heterodoxy could ever be sustained against any person filling the chair of this Professorship. Nor do we see, on these principles, that the requisitions of the founders, afford any security against the introduction of dangerous and even fatal error.

The foregoing considerations would have great weight in our minds, if we were perfectly satisfied with the doctrines at present taught in the New-Haven school; but,

3. The theological views maintained by the Professors, have given great and extensive dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction has not been produced by vague rumors, as to what the Professors are supposed to believe and teach, but by a perusal of their own published statements,—statements which seem to us to be utterly inconsistent with the creeds to which they still acknowledge their assent; and which make it evident to our minds, that while they adopt the language of these creeds, they must affix to that language a meaning altogether different from that in which it has been commonly received. It is well known, that different individuals may attach a very different meaning to the same forms of expression. The proposition that *Jesus is the Christ*, is assented to, both by the Calvinist and the Socinian; but how widely different is the construction which they put upon this language, and how utterly at variance are their views of the character of the Saviour! An expressed assent to the same general propositions, by different individuals, is no evidence of harmony of views, when their own explanations of these propositions, are irreconcilably at variance. Now it does appear to us, that in the explanations which the Professors have given of some of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, they have adopted principles, which lead, by legitimate consequence, to the utter subversion of those doctrines. This, we think, has been conclusively shown, in publications which have appeared within the last five or six years. To those who have carefully perused these publications, it cannot be necessary, that we should add anything in proof of the above position. For the benefit of others, it may be necessary to advert briefly to a few examples.

In the first place, The Professors have advanced positions, which seem to us to subvert the doctrine of the divine decrees. They maintain that "God prefers, *all things considered*, holiness to sin, in all instances in which the latter takes place;" and that sin is suffered to exist, because God could not entirely prevent its existence in a moral system. They

insist, that it is utterly inconsistent with the goodness of God, to suppose, that "he preferred, decreed, and made a universe, comprising sin and its everlasting miseries," when he "could, if he would, have made a universe of perfectly holy and happy beings." Were we to adopt these principles, we should feel ourselves compelled to renounce the doctrine of decrees, as it is taught in the Scriptures. It is matter of fact, that God has "made a universe, comprising sin and its everlasting miseries;" and the Scriptures assert, "As for God, his way is perfect. Who can stay his hand? Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deep places." How can this be true, if the present universe is not such, as God, on the whole, prefers; and if he would have made a different universe, had it been in his power? Who ever heard, that any being ever purposed, or chose, that a thing should exist, when he preferred, *all things considered*, that something else should exist in its stead? How is it possible for God to prefer, *on any account*, the existence of sin *in any instance*, if, *all things considered*, that is, *on all accounts*, he prefers something else in its stead, *in all instances*? Until this question can be satisfactorily answered, the views of the Professors, must be regarded as utterly irreconcilable with the Calvinistic creed.

Again: The principles adopted by the Professors, seem to us to subvert the doctrines of special grace, and of particular election. If it be true, that "God, *all things considered*, prefers holiness to sin, in all instances in which the latter takes place," then it must be his choice, *all things considered*, that all men should become holy and be saved; and his infinite benevolence will prompt him to do all in his power to bring all men to repentance. What then becomes of the doctrines of special grace, and of particular election? *Who maketh thee to differ*? Not God, surely; for if he prefers, *all things considered*, holiness to sin in every instance, he will do all in his power to prevent sin, and secure holiness in its stead, in every instance. To say that God chooses not to secure that which he, on the whole, prefers, and which he is able to secure, is a manifest contradiction.

Again: The Professors maintain, that "mankind come into the world with the same nature, in kind, as that with which Adam was created;" and that "the only reason that the posterity of Adam do not exhibit the same moral character which Adam exhibited, is not that they have a different nature, but that they are placed in different circumstances." These positions appear to us, to be utterly inconsistent with the Calvinistic views of the original character of man, and of the consequences of the apostacy. Were we to adopt these principles, we could not believe, that man was originally created holy, or that there is any real connexion between the sin of Adam and that of his posterity; nor could we believe, that infants are, in any sense, sinners, and need to be born again, or to be redeemed by the blood of Christ. If admitted to heaven, they must, according to these principles, for aught that we can see, be accepted on the ground of their own righteousness, and without regeneration, contrary to the express declarations of Christ and the apostle. John iii. 3; Rom. iii. 20.

Again: The Professors maintain; that self-love, or the desire of happiness, is the grand principle by which all moral beings, whether sinful or holy, are actuated. They say, "Of all specific, voluntary action, the happiness of the agent, in some form, is the ultimate end." Were we to adopt this principle, we should feel ourselves compelled to give up the doctrine of disinterested love, and to deny all radical distinction between holiness and sin. According to this theory, the distinction of moral character which exists among men, does not arise from the fact that they

have different ultimate ends, but from the fact that they employ different means to obtain the same ultimate end. The reason that one is holy, and another sinful is, the one *seeks his own happiness*, by choosing God as his portion, or chief good; the other *seeks his own happiness*, by choosing the world as his portion, or chief good. Both have a supreme regard to their own happiness. Consequently, holiness and sin are to be traced to the same principle of action. We cannot but say, what we honestly believe, that the religion which is in accordance with this theory, is a selfish, and, of course, a spurious religion.

Again: The Professors maintain, that antecedent to regeneration, the selfish principle is suspended in the sinner's heart; and that, prompted by self-love, he uses the means of regeneration, with motives which are neither sinful nor holy.

This theory, seems to us, to subvert the doctrine of regeneration by the special agency of the Holy Spirit; for it supposes every thing which renders that agency necessary, to be removed, antecedent to a change of heart. How can it be necessary, that God should interpose, by the almighty energy of his Spirit, to effect the conversion of a sinner, after his selfishness is suspended, and his opposition to the motives of the gospel, has ceased?

This theory, also seems to us, to involve the doctrine of progressive regeneration,—a doctrine utterly at variance with the Calvinistic system.

Again: The Professors have advanced principles which seem to us to subvert the doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance. They say, "Free, moral agents can do wrong under all possible preventing influence. Using their powers as they may use them, they will sin; and NO ONE CAN SHOW that some such agents will not use their powers as they may use them. This possibility that free agents will sin, remains, (*suppose what else you will*.) so long as moral agency remains, and how can it be proved THAT A THING WILL NOT BE, WHEN FOR AUGHT THAT APPEARS, IT MAY BE? When, in view of all the facts and evidence in the case, it remains true that *it may be*, WHAT EVIDENCE OR PROOF CAN EXIST THAT IT WILL NOT BE?"

According to the principles here laid down, what evidence or proof can exist, that God will be able to prevent the total and final apostacy of every saint and every angel? Saints and angels are free moral agents; and, according to the principles here laid down, the possibility that they will apostatize remains, (*suppose what else you will*.) "and how can it be proved THAT A THING WILL NOT BE, WHEN, FOR AUGHT THAT APPEARS, IT MAY BE? When in view of all the facts and evidence in the case, it remains true that saints MAY APOSTATIZE, WHAT EVIDENCE OR PROOF CAN EXIST THAT THEY WILL NOT APOSTATIZE?"\*

We wish it to be distinctly understood, that we do no charge the Professors, with admitting the consequences which we have deduced from their principles; but we cannot conceal our solemn conviction, that the

\* The publications in which the principles above referred to, and others equally objectionable, may be found, are a *Concio ad Clerum*, preached in the chapel of Yale College, Sept. 10, 1828; Review of Dr. Spring on the Means of Regeneration, *Christ. Spect.* for March, June, September, and December, 1829; Review of Dr. Tyler's *Strictures*, *Christ. Spect.* for March, 1830; Review of Dr. Wood's *Letters*, *Christ. Spect.* for Sept. 1830; Letter to Dr. Hawes, *Christ. Spect.* for March, 1832; Reply to Dr. Tyler in the *Spirit of the Pilgrims*, Vols. V. and VI.; Review of Dr. Tyler's *Remarks*, *Christ. Spect.* for Sept. 1832; Letter to the Editor, *Christ. Spect.* for Sept. 1833. Of these publications, Dr. Taylor is either the avowed or reputed author. Review of Taylor and Harvey, *Christ. Spect.* for June 1829, supposed to be written principally by Prof. Goodrich; Review of Dr. Fiske on Predestination, *Christ. Spect.* for Dec. 1831; and a *Treatise on the Divine Permission of Sin*, *Christ. Spect.* for Dec. 1832, from the pen of Prof. Fitch.

principles, which they have advanced, do necessarily lead to these consequences; and that were we to adopt them, we should feel ourselves compelled to renounce the distinguishing doctrines of the Calvinistic creed. Nor are we alone in this conviction. It is a conviction, which exists extensively in the Christian Community; and in the minds of a large portion of the most distinguished divines in the country. We might add, also, to some extent in Great Britain.\*

4. Another ground of dissatisfaction, is, the great importance which the Professors have attached to their peculiar views, and the charges of dangerous error, which they have brought against their brethren. They have charged their brethren, (whose views have been shown to harmonize with those of the standard orthodox writers of New England,) with having advanced theories which lead to the most shocking and blasphemous errors—theories, which involve the positions, that ‘sin is a good thing’: “good in itself”—“the only real good to man”—that “when men sin, they do the very best thing they can do”—that “God is the responsible author of sin”—that “the terms of salvation, and the exhibition of motives to comply with them, are a delusive mockery”—that “God is a criminal tempter” that “in no respect is Satan more truly criminal as a tempter than God is”—that we ought to praise God for all the sin which we and others have ever committed”—that “to sin and be damned to all eternity, is the result, and the sole result, in respect to the greater part of mankind, designed, preferred and purposed by their Maker”—that “the worst kind of moral action is the best”—and that “mankind are bound to believe that they shall please and glorify God more by sin, than by obedience, and therefore to act accordingly.” They have also alleged, that nothing but the inconsistency of their brethren, saves them from being “THE VERY WORST OF HERETICS; and that their theories “if carried out into their legitimate consequences, lead to UNIVERSALISM, TO INFIDELITY, AND TO ATHEISM.”†

We do not complain of the Professors, for bringing these charges, if they sincerely believe there is a foundation for them; but we do utterly protest against the assumption, that there is no important difference of opinion between them and brethren against whom such charges are preferred.

In view of the foregoing facts and considerations, we appeal to a candid public, whether there is, or is not, any ground for the dissatisfaction which exists in relation to the New Haven school, and whether we are engaged in an enterprise for which no justifiable reason can be assigned.

While we have felt it our duty to speak thus plainly of the doctrines inculcated in the New Haven school, we wish it to be distinctly understood, that we entertain none but the kindest feelings towards the Professors, and those who accord with them in their theological views. We concede to them the right, to maintain and defend their own opinions: and we ask them to allow us the privilege, of maintaining, and inculcating what we believe to be the faith once delivered to the saints. To say that the founders of this seminary, “had a right to form, and publicly to avow

\* See an article in the Eclectic Review, from the pen of Dr. John Pye Smith.

† All these quotations, and much more of a similar character, will be found in the Review of Dr. Tyler’s Remarks in the Christian Spectator, for September 1832, and in Dr. Taylor’s communications in the Spirit of the Pilgrims. It should be remembered, that none of these charges, nor any of the statements of the Professors, which have produced so much dissatisfaction in the public mind, have ever yet been retracted.

their own religious principles ; to say, that they had a right to consecrate a portion of their property, to the defence and diffusion of these principles, and to guard the sacred deposit against perversion as they have done in their statutes, is only to claim in their behalf, a participation in the privileges common to every Protestant, and to every citizen of a free country."

We utterly disclaim every thing like hostility to Yale College. That venerable Institution, is, and ever will be, dear to our hearts ; and while we deeply lament the existence of evils which seem to us to threaten its best interests, we shall not cease to pray, that its usefulness may be perpetuated, and greatly enhanced.

We disclaim all intention to render the seminary under our care, a party institution. We have no peculiar views to inculcate, no party purposes to subserve. We mean not to assume a belligerent attitude, or to array ourselves against any other institution. While we maintain what we believe to be the truth, our intention is, so far as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men. In proof of our pacific intentions, we appeal to the testimony of the very men, who have arraigned us before the public. The Professors say : "Had the articles of the New Seminary been framed expressly as articles of peace and concord, designed to exclude as unessential, all the points which have been so long in controversy, they could hardly have taken a better form for the attainment of so desirable an end."

By this declaration, they "are forever precluded from saying or insinuating," that the new Seminary is intended to be a party institution. If they can *ex-animo*, and without qualification, or reservation, subscribe these articles ; and if they intend to teach nothing inconsistent with them, we sincerely rejoice in the fact. But that they can subscribe them *consistently*, in the sense in which we receive them, and in the sense in which the language has heretofore been generally understood, we shall find it impossible to believe, till they have retracted some of their published statements, or explained them in a manner more satisfactory, than they have hitherto done.

But while we frankly acknowledge, that the facts which we have stated, are among the reasons which led to the establishment of the Theological Institute ; we wish the public to understand, that there are other considerations by which we are influenced in the prosecution of our enterprise.

The growing demand for ministers of the gospel, and the rapid increase of theological students, occasioned by the efforts of education societies, and by frequent revivals of religion, seem to us to call for an increased number of Theological Institutions.

We believe also, that as there is a liability in such institutions to become corrupt in doctrine, their number ought to be so increased, that they shall operate as a check upon each other, and that no one shall become overgrown. If there were but one such seminary in New England, and if, with its large endowments, and extended patronage, it should become the seat of heresy, who can estimate the evils of which it would be instrumental ? And here we cannot but advert to the fact, that the history of all past ages admonishes us, that large and overgrown institutions are peculiarly liable to corruption. By increasing the number, we diminish the dangers arising from this source, and throw around the churches, additional safe-guards against the inroads of destructive error.

There is still another consideration which has had no small weight in our minds. Until recently, the subject of physical education has received

but little attention ; but its importance is beginning now to be deeply and extensively felt. Facts have been disclosed, which go to show, that the destruction of life and health, in our literary and theological Seminaries, occasioned by the neglect of systematic bodily exercise, is truly appalling.

It appears from the testimony of a large number of the most respectable teachers in our own country, that "of those who deserve the character of close students, full one half, if not more, injure themselves by an injudicious neglect of exercise ; and that of these, full one fourth, if not a third, lay a foundation for feebleness and disease which go with them through life, and greatly diminish both their usefulness and enjoyment." This evil surely calls for a remedy ; and we know of no remedy which promises to be more successful than that provided by manual labor institutions. Such is the institution under our care ; and if the plan shall succeed according to our wishes, it will possess the two fold advantage, of contributing to preserve the lives and health of the students, and of enabling them at the same time, to defray, in part, at least, the expenses of their education. Is not this part of the plan, worthy of encouragement ?

We would add in conclusion, that the enterprize in which we are embarked was not undertaken without much deliberation, and earnest prayer to Almighty God. The convention which met in East Windsor, September 10, 1833, and which resolved on the establishment of this Seminary, spent two days in prayerful consultation. It was a season of peculiar interest. Deeply impressed with a sense of the responsibility under which they were acting, they looked to the great Head of the church for direction : and unless they were greatly deceived, they enjoyed special tokens of his presence. Nothing like party feelings, seemed to characterize their deliberations. The great and all-absorbing inquiry, was, what do the honor of God, and the interests of his kingdom demand ? They were unanimous in their result. Fully satisfied that they had discovered the path of duty, they resolved to go forward in the strength of the Lord. Hitherto he has seemed to smile on the enterprize, even beyond our most sanguine expectations. Friends have appeared both in, and out of the State, who have aided us by liberal donations. A commodious building has been erected, and is now prepared for the accommodation of students. An excellent farm has been purchased, and a workshop will soon be completed. A respectable library has been collected. Teachers have been provided, who are on the ground, and ready to enter upon their labors. A respectable number of students have already expressed a desire to enjoy the benefits of the Institution. In view of these tokens of the divine favor, we would desire to be humble, and unfeignedly thankful. But our Seminary is still in its infancy ; and a much greater amount of funds, than has yet been received, will be needed to carry into full execution the plans which we contemplate. We cannot doubt, however, that He to whom the silver and the gold belong, and who has the hearts of all men in his hands, will raise up patrons and benefactors. To him we still commit our cause, sensible, that *except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it* ; feeling assured, also, that if He shall smile upon our enterprize, it cannot be overthrown ; and being willing, if our hearts deceive us not, that if it does not meet with His approbation, it should come to nought.

East Windsor, October 14th, 1834.











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